

D-8 FMs back Gaza



By Mehdi
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**OPINION
EXCLUSIVE**

The foreign ministers of the D-8 group of Muslim developing nations convened in Istanbul yesterday, under Turkey's auspices, with Iran's Acting Foreign Minister Ali Baqeri in attendance. Founded in 1996, the D-8 comprises eight Islamic nations—Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, Egypt, and Nigeria—representing 1.2 billion people globally and boasting a combined GDP of \$4.8 trillion. As the primary decision-making authority within the organization, the Council of Ministers consists of the foreign ministers from each member state. The recent meeting aimed to cultivate a unified stance against the Zionist regime in light of the Gaza war.

Eight months into the Gaza war, the mounting Palestinian death toll has surpassed 36,000, with women and children constituting over 70% of the casualties. Undeterred by widespread international condemnation, the Zionist regime continues its atrocities, perpetrating acts of genocide and targeting Palestinian refugees in Rafah. Muslim communities around the world demand tangible action from their governments to support the Palestinian people, as evidenced by numerous demonstrations in Muslim countries denouncing the Zionist regime.

Despite global public support for Gaza—extending beyond Islamic nations to Europe and America—some critics lament the perceived inaction of the Arab world in the face of the regime's crimes. Several Muslim countries in the region persist in maintaining trade ties with the Zionist regime, catering to its energy and transportation needs. In an effort to extend support to the Palestinians, the D-8 members assembled for this critical foreign ministers' meeting.

The D-8, primarily an economic alliance, is holding its first meeting focused on a political matter—the Palestinian issue. The Islamic Republic of Iran, an active and influential D-8 member, participated at the foreign minister level, underscoring the significance of the Palestinian cause in its foreign policy. Baqeri, following his recent visits to Lebanon and Syria and a series of diplomatic phone calls, continues to advocate for the Islamic Republic of Iran's proposal to convene an emergency meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). By prominently featuring this topic on the D-8 agenda and participating actively in the meeting, Iran emphasizes its unwavering commitment to supporting the Islamic Resistance

Front in the wake of Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian's passing.

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SPECIAL ISSUE

Since the onset of Israel's aggression on the Gaza Strip, numerous demonstrations, rallies, and campaigns have unfolded across various American cities, protesting the attack on Gaza and opposing the Biden administration's protective policies towards Israel. The turning point of these protests in the United States can be traced back to April 17 at Columbia University, with the movement rapidly gaining traction and spreading to other universities and academic institutions worldwide.



Iran presents transportation-related proposals to BRICS



Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash presented Tehran's proposals in the first meeting of the transport ministers of members of the BRICS group of emerging economies to enhance multilateral cooperation in the field of transportation and logistics.

In the meeting which was held on the sidelines of the 27th St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) in Russia, the Iranian minister delivered a speech via video conference and Ambassador of Iran to Russia Kazem Jalali also represented the Islamic Republic in the international forum. Bazrpash referred to Iran's potential and actual capacities in the fields of transportation and transit, including the International North-South-East-West Corridor, and declared the Islamic country's readiness for the digitalization of transportation and logistics supply chains, human resources training, and innovations in line with the objectives of BRICS.

The bloc consists of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, accounting for 42 percent of the global population and about 27 percent of both the world's land area and the world's economy.

The Iranian minister also proposed suggestions for achieving the BRICS objectives, including cooperation in the innovation of supply chains, urban mobility consistent with the significance of developing urban public transport systems, training of competent human resources to create a reliable transport system, and financing transport projects. Bazrpash emphasized that the International North-South Corridor can improve synergy among the BRICS member states in the field of transportation and transit.

As many as 700 million tons of cargo are transported through this corridor per annum, and the volume of transit via the Iranian territory grew by more than 60% to around 17 million tons in 2023, he added. Bazrpash said the Islamic Republic of Iran, boasting a superb geographic location and extensive transit advantages, being placed at the intersection of the aforementioned transit corridor with 11 ports on the Caspian Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Oman Sea, as well as possessing a 15,000-kilometer railway network with more than 250,000 kilometers of various types of roads and 26 land border terminals, enjoys the potential to connect regional and international trade networks via land with the minimum time and cost.

The SPIEF brings together representatives from 136 countries, and in total, over 17,000 people attend the forum, which is held under the slogan "The Basis of a Multipolar World - Formation of New Growth Points."

Ministers and representatives from Iran, Russia, Brazil, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates spoke in person or via video-link.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Agrofood 2024 expo opened in Tehran

The 31st International Exhibition of Food, Food Technology & Agriculture and Related Industries dubbed "Iran Agrofood 2024" was inaugurated in Tehran on Saturday.

Iran's Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Mehdi Zeyghami attended the opening ceremony of the expo, as reported by Tasnim News Agency.

More than 800 domestic companies and 136 foreign companies from 11 countries, namely Spain, Austria, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Italy, Germany, Thailand, Turkey, China, Denmark, Russia and India, have participated in this edition of the exhibition to showcase their latest achievements and technologies.

The event provides unique opportunities for both Iranian and foreign industrialists to



share their experiences and know-how with one another.

Like in previous years, trade delegations from various

countries are also expected to partake in this edition of

the exhibition, which will run through June 11.

Annual exports of aquatics hit \$650m



The director general of the Iranian Ministry of Agriculture's Department of Quality Improvement, Processing and Aquatic Market said \$650 million worth of aquatics was exported from the country in the previous Iranian year starting from March 21, 2023, to March 19, 2024. Abbas Mokhtari said 139,000 tons of fishery products, valued at \$528 million, were exported from the country between March 21, 2020 and March 20, 2021, Tasnim

News Agency reported. Mokhtari further pointed out that steps were taken during the tenure of the late president Ebrahim Raisi to spur the production and export of aquatics. Aquaculture is playing an increasingly important role in meeting the world's food needs, surpassing wild fisheries in aquatic animal production for the first time, according to a report published by the United Nations on Friday. With global demand for

aquatic foods expected to keep growing, an increase in sustainable production is vital to ensure healthy diets, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization said. In 2022, aquaculture yielded 94.4 million tons of aquatic animal production -- 51 percent of the total, and 57 percent of the production destined for human consumption, it said. "Aquatic systems are increasingly recognized as vital for food and nutrition securi-

ty," according to the report, which was released as experts gathered in Costa Rica for talks on ocean conservation.

"Because of their great diversity and capacity to supply ecosystem services and sustain healthy diets, aquatic food systems represent a viable and effective solution that offers greater opportunities to improve global food security and nutrition," it added. While wild fisheries production has stayed largely unchanged for decades, aquaculture has increased by 6.6 percent since 2020, the report said, adding that the sustainability of wild fishery resources remained a cause for concern.

The proportion of marine stocks fished within biologically sustainable levels decreased to 62.3 percent in 2021, 2.3 percent lower than in 2019, according to the UN report.

"Urgent action is needed to accelerate fishery stock conservation and rebuilding," it said.

With the world's population projected to reach 8.5 billion by 2030, "providing sufficient food, nutrition and liveli-

hoods for this growing population demands significant investments," it added.

"Aquaculture has a major role to play, particularly in Africa where its great potential is not yet realized," the report said, noting that more than 40 percent of the world's population cannot afford a healthy diet.

Aquatic products remain one of the most traded food commodities, generating a record \$195 billion in 2022 -- a 19 percent increase from pre-pandemic levels, it said. "Despite these significant achievements, the sector still faces major challenges from climate change and disasters, water scarcity, pollution, biodiversity loss" and other man-made impacts, it added.

The report was released to coincide with a meeting in San Jose of country representatives, scientists and international experts to prepare for the third UN Ocean Conference to be held in France in 2025.

United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Social Affairs Li Junhua said at the start of the talks that protecting the ocean was "not an option but an imperative."

Iran produces diesel, black carbon from wastewater for first time

The chief executive of the Tehran Sewage Company announced the production of diesel and black carbon from dewatered sludge in the process of wastewater treatment plants in the Iranian capital.

It is hoped that production of diesel and black carbon will be operationalized in the current year (started March 20, 2024), Abbasali Meszadeh stated, as reported by IRNA.

As black carbon is used as the raw material in industries, especially in the tire manufacturing industry, he

noted that its production in the process of wastewater treatment can both create added value and prevent environmental pollution. Converting 120 tons of sludge daily to diesel and black carbon is the company's main plan in the current year, he said, stressing that it can be used in the heating system of the wastewater treatment plants and facilities related to it.

At first glance, sewage and wastewater are considered a source of pollution and threat to human communi-

ties, the official said, noting that what comes to pass in hygienic sewage collection projects is turning threats into opportunities. Iran is one of the leading countries in the Middle East in the generation of

electricity from sewage. In addition to generating electricity at the wastewater power plants, the heat caused by the gas engines is used to replace fossil fuels for providing warmwater, he added.





Salt wonders of Garmsar



Iranica Desk

Garmsar is a city in Semnan Province, bordered by Damavand to the north, Varamin to the west, Aradan to the east, and the central desert of Iran to the south. The region boasts a diverse array of natural attractions and sightseeing spots that are captivating. From the unique Martian hills to the salt tunnel, Garmsar attracts many tourists each year. With the largest mines

and salt tunnels in the Middle East, Garmsar currently houses 40 salt tunnels, playing a crucial role in salt extraction in Iran. Various countries worldwide, such as Italy, Germany, and Poland, harness the positive effects of salt by establishing specialized facilities for energy or salt therapy to promote medical tourism. Iran, blessed with plentiful salt mines, can leverage this natural wonder to boost tourism, especially during the winter

season. Geological studies have examined the quality of water resources in the Hablehrud region of Garmsar. Padeh, a village in the Aradan district of Garmsar in Semnan Province, stands out from other tourist attractions in the region due to its large salt tunnels. The Kouhdasht Mine is situated in the southeast of Garmsar and to the east of Tehran. It is where salt domes covered with gypsum and salt emerge. Within these

salt domes, oil traps are found. One of these mines resembles a mountain, with the salt extraction process leading to the formation of a hand-dug cave. In general, a specific pattern is employed for tunnel construction on roads to guarantee the strength, durability, and safety of the tunnel. However, for the excavation of the entrance and formation of this salt cave, only the height and width from the surface are taken into account,

with the height roughly double the width and in a rectangular shape. At the entrance of the cave, the walls are dark, but as you approach its depth, they gradually brighten. The proximity to these illuminated surfaces suggests that the excavation at that point in the cave is recent. Walking through these tunnels, visitors encounter walls constructed of salt, adorned with hanging stalactites of salt ice that enhance

the beauty of the tunnels. Martian hills, domes, and salt tunnels are scattered across a vast area. Approximately 27 salt mines surround Garmsar, with these attractions specifically situated about 15 kilometers west of Garmsar and 90 kilometers from Tehran along the Eyvanekey and Garmsar road. To visit the salt tunnels, you must obtain permission from the Traffic Police to access the salt mine roads with a bus.

Enchanting Pahlevanpour Garden in Mehriz

Iranica Desk

Pahlevanpour Garden is one of the most remarkable historical monuments of Mehriz, a city in Yazd Province. Dating back to the Qajar Era, the garden, registered on Iran's National Heritage List in 2002, is one of nine Persian gardens recognized on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

The Pahlevanpour Garden was originally owned by an individual named Hassan Molareza. It was then passed down to his son-in-law, Ali Pahlevanpour, a Yazdi merchant, from whom the garden acquired its name. Upon entering the garden, the first thing that catches the eye of every visitor is the soothing sound of water flowing in its mainstream. Sourced from the Hassanabad Qanat, this water does not pass through any other garden on its path. Additionally, the garden is also irrigated by the Shahhosseini and Mazvirabad qanats.

The garden is adorned with ancient and sturdy trees that line the stream, as well as an abundance of fruit trees such as almond, pomegranate, and persimmon. The presence of these trees in the garden is a testament to the fact that despite the dry and warm climate of the province, the area enjoys relatively cool weather. The architecture of the garden signifies the

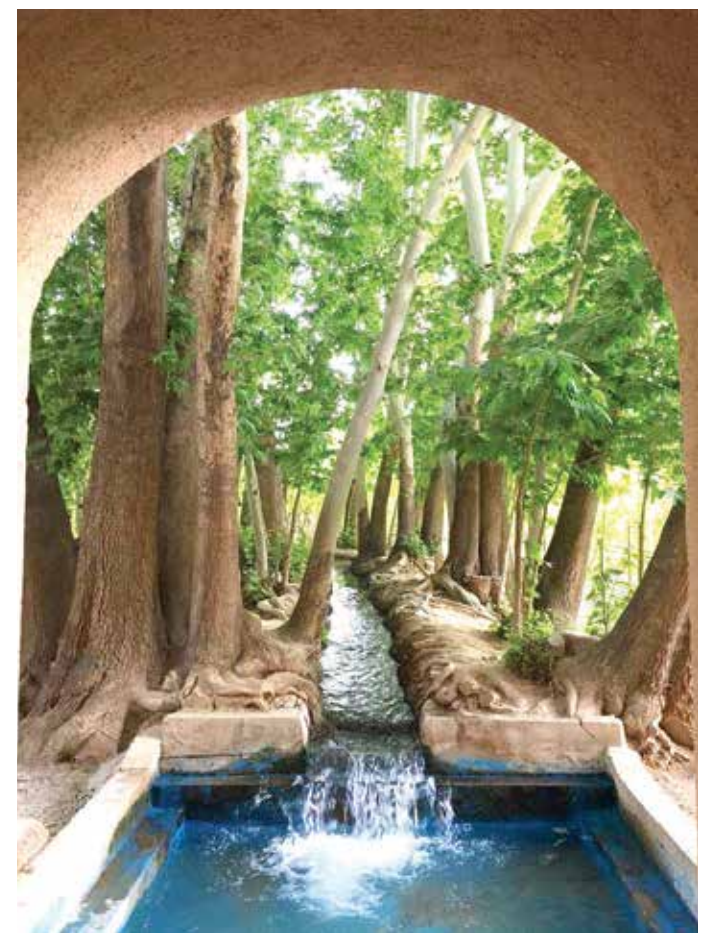
shift that has occurred in the style of Persian garden construction. In other words, while the garden is not very old, modern architectural elements can be observed in its structures. However, the inclusion of certain features such as the koushk (a pavilion surrounded by a garden) harkens back to ancient Iranian culture and art.

At the garden entrance stands a tower and a stable all dating back to the Qajar era. The most impressive feature of the garden is its *koushk*, a structure with intricate decorations and multiple levels built during the same era. Inside, visitors can explore the main hall, a *kolah farangi* mansion, and a pool house, all adorned with stunning architecture. The *koushk* is situated along

the main path with a water stream flowing through it from the Hassanabad Qanat.

Another delightful feature of the garden is its winter house, a relatively newer structure built during the Pahlavi Era. This one-story building comprises several living rooms, a kitchen, and various other spaces designed to be functional during the winter months. Additionally, the garden includes carpet-weaving and spinning workshops, a warehouse, and a building designated for the residence of servants.

Moreover, the Pahlevanpour Garden is home to the Anthropology Museum of Mehriz, showcasing over 400 ancient artifacts such as tools from different occupations, old manuscripts, and traditional garments.



Zionism trampled by widespread campus rallies



PERSPECTIVE

Since the onset of Israel's aggression on the Gaza Strip, numerous demonstrations, rallies, and campaigns have unfolded across various American cities, protesting the attack on Gaza and opposing the Biden administration's protective policies towards Israel. The turning point of these protests in the United States can be traced back to April 17 at Columbia University, with the movement rapidly gaining traction and spreading to other universities and academic institutions worldwide.

The anti-Israeli student protests in the United States initially commenced as a peaceful gathering of Columbia University students, advocating for an end to the war in Gaza. The situation escalated when the New York City police resorted to mass arrests within student campuses. On April 22, the protests extended to several universities along the US East Coast, including New York University, Yale University, Emerson College, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and Tufts University, resulting in additional mass arrests in New York and Yale. In the following days, these protests enveloped the United States, reaching universities in more than 46 of the 50 US states and the District of Columbia. It can be argued that these protests constitute a novel social phenomenon for Americans, who have traditionally defined support for the Zionist regime as an intrinsic component of their foreign policy perspective. This movement is expected to gain further momentum in the coming days and months.

US Foreign Policy characterized the nature of student protests in America as a political crisis rooted in the nation's foreign policy, particularly Washington's enduring and close relationship with Israel, as opposed to the alleged cultural or higher education crisis some have claimed.

The wave of anti-Israeli protests by American university students was not confined to the United States; concurrently, demonstrations condemning the Palestinian genocide in Gaza spread across Europe, Australia, and Canada. Pro-Palestinian students orchestrated large-scale protest rallies in such countries as Argentina, Australia, Canada, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mexico, New Zealand, Spain, Tunisia, the United Kingdom, and Yemen.

Top universities where students stood against Israel

Stanford University

Established in 1885 and opening its doors six years later, Stanford University is renowned for its expansive campus and prestigious reputation as one of the world's leading educational institutions. Its entrepreneurial spirit emerged post-World War II. In 1970, the university played a vital role in laying the groundwork for the Internet by hosting part of the ini-

tial network.

Stanford boasts 21 Nobel laureates among its alumni and has strong associations with distinguished individuals in the realms of business, politics, media, sports, and technology. The university has a history of sending prominent figures to the United States Congress. Moreover, companies founded by Stanford alumni

and affiliates generate an impressive \$2.7 trillion in annual revenue, including industry giants such as Nike, Netflix, Hewlett-Packard, Sun Microsystems, Instagram, Snapchat, PayPal, and Yahoo. Notably, Sally Ride, the first American woman in space, earned her bachelor's degree in physics from Stanford University in 1973.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)

Renowned as an independent, private research university nestled in Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT takes pride in its distinguished alumni, including 85 Nobel laureates, 58 National Science Medal recipients, 29 National Technology and Innovation Medal winners, and 45 MacArthur Fellows.

Among its notable graduates is former United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan. Scientific breakthroughs and technological advancements attributed to MIT encompass the first chemical synthesis of penicillin, radar development, quark discovery, and magnetic core memory invention,

paving the way for digital computers. The university asserts that its living alumni have established over 30,000 active companies, generating 4.6 million jobs and nearly \$1.9 trillion in annual revenue. In a testament to its impact, MIT likens its economic clout to that of the world's tenth-largest economy.

Harvard University

As the oldest university in the United States, dating back to 1636, Harvard University enjoys global recognition as one of the most esteemed educational institutions. The university's name pays homage to its first benefactor, John Harvard, who bequeathed his library and half of his estate to the

institution upon his demise in 1638.

This private Ivy League university has cultivated connections with over 45 Nobel laureates, more than 30 heads of state, and 48 Pulitzer Prize winners. Thirteen United States presidents boast honorary degrees from Harvard. Recent faculty

members who have garnered the Nobel Prize include chemist Martin Karplus and economist Alvin Roth. Notably, Harvard commands one of the largest financial endowments among higher education institutions worldwide, most recently reporting a value of \$50.7 billion in 2023.

Princeton University

Renowned as one of the oldest universities in the United States, Princeton stands out as a distinguished institution of higher learning globally. Famed for its dedication to teaching, this Ivy League university provides campus housing to all students throughout their four years of study, boasting 98% undergraduate on-campus residency. Moreover, Princeton's research prominence has nurtured over 40

Nobel laureates, 17 National Medal of Science recipients, and 5 National Humanities Medal honorees. Two former US presidents, James Madison and Woodrow Wilson, add to the notable alumni list that includes Michelle Obama, wife of Barack Obama, and Amazon founder Jeff Bezos.

California Institute of Technology (Caltech) Caltech is a world-class science and engineer-

ing research-educational institution known for its highly selective admissions process, admitting only a chosen few. Graduates and faculty members have garnered 39 Nobel Prizes, one Fields Medal, 6 Turing Awards, and 71 US National Medals of Science or Technology, underscoring the university's distinction. Caltech's influence further extends to nurturing four US Air Force senior scientists.

Columbia University, catalyst for anti-Israeli protests

Columbia University, celebrated for its global research prominence and exceptional educational environment across diverse fields, holds particular significance due to its New York City location and esteemed academic values. Many of Columbia's graduate programs consistently rank among the top 10 national programs for research productivity. The university's reputation is further solidified by its alumni, who include numerous influential government figures. Thirteen presidents and five members of the National Hall of Fame have graced Columbia's halls, with notable graduates such as former US President Barack Obama, writer and professor of biochemistry at Boston University Isaac Asimov, actress Alicia Keys, and US Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Columbia University's unique importance, along with the White House's keen interest, is underscored by its reputation as a nurturing ground for America's future leaders. In light of the recent anti-Israeli uprising initiated by its students, the university, renowned for its history of anti-war and anti-apartheid demonstrations, now symbolizes a place fostering future leaders who challenge the United States' longstanding policies, object to Israel's support, and oppose Israel's atrocities in Gaza.



American university students demand that the US government and Congress cease their unwavering support for Israel.





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The arrest of pro-Palestinian students peacefully demonstrating against American financial support for Israel exposes the hypocrisy of the United States' self-proclaimed stance as a staunch defender of free speech.



US longstanding history of student protests against war and racism

Student-led protest rallies in American universities have a rich history spanning several decades. In the 1960s, students vehemently opposed America's involvement in the Vietnam War, organizing massive demonstrations and calling for a change in the government's stance. The apex of these protests occurred on May 4, 1970, at Kent University, where Ohio National Guard soldiers opened fire on thousands of protesting students, resulting in four fatalities and nine injuries. This incident catalyzed wide-

spread protests and strikes across numerous American universities.

Presently, over 50 years later, progressive American lawmakers have drawn parallels between the recent police suppression of anti-war student rallies and the deadly response to Vietnam War student protests, urging President Joe Biden to avoid repeating past mistakes. Criticism surrounding the student crackdown mounts as analysts caution that Biden's reaction to student an-

ti-war demonstrations "could morph into Biden's Vietnam." Students participating in pro-Palestinian freedom protests on campuses nationwide have consistently referenced the legacy of student resistance and government suppression at pivotal moments in American history. They assert that universities should serve as venues fostering rational discussions around contentious topics while encouraging dialogue "even across painful and divisive issues."

Demands of pro-Palestinian students

The ongoing protests stem from a series of demands made by pro-Palestinian students. They call for American universities to sever financial ties with Israel and companies involved in the Gaza war, urging their academic institutions to join the global Boycott, Divest-

ment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement to end the atrocities in Gaza and secure Palestinian rights. Additionally, students demand that the US government and Congress cease their unwavering support for Israel. Other key demands include terminating academic collab-

orations with Israeli institutions, disclosing universities' investments and rejecting university research funding from Israel.

In response to police brutality against student protesters and disciplinary cases imposed on them, amnesty for penalized or dismissed stu-

dents and faculty members has been added to the protesters' list of demands. These demonstrations began as the US House of Representatives recently approved a \$95 billion foreign aid package, which includes assistance to the Zionist regime.

University crackdown on anti-Israel student protests

From the onset of these gatherings, university presidents escalated tensions by requesting police presence on campus, transforming peaceful assemblies into violent conflicts. For instance, New York police appeared at

Columbia University during the early stages of student protests, leading to numerous arrests and hours-long detentions. Participating students now risk suspension, student card confiscation, expulsion from dormitories,

and even university dismissal. According to the Associated Press, almost 3,000 individuals have been arrested during anti-Israel student protests across the United States.

Professors join anti-Israel protests, face potential backlash

Only days after anti-Israel student rallies commenced at American universities, Columbia University experienced a significant professors' strike in solidarity with arrested student protesters who erected protest tents. While the exact number of participating university

professors remains unclear, The Guardian reported "hundreds of university faculty protested."

New York University faculty members also participated in demonstrations at their campus, leading to multiple arrests. Affected

professors included Christopher Brown, Columbia's History professor; Hilary Callahan, Barnard's Biology professor; Julie Crawford, Columbia's English and Literature professor; Elizabeth Bernstein, Barnard's Women's Studies professor; Carolyn Follin, Economics

professor; and Noelle Mack Afi, Emory University's Philosophy department head.

The professional future of many of these professors is now threatened by university financial sponsors, groups, and politically influential individuals.

Prominent figures react to US student protests

Robert Kraft, the American billionaire and New England Patriots owner, declared his refusal to provide financial aid to Columbia University following campus riots and police intervention. As a Columbia alumnus and founder of the Kraft Columbia Center for Jewish Student Life, Kraft expressed his disappointment on Instagram, asserting that "Columbia can

no longer protect its students and staff."

Gerald Nadler, a Columbia graduate and the oldest Jewish member of the House of Representatives, emphasized the university's responsibility to safeguard students and maintain a conducive educational environment.

Columbia University professor Howard W. French, in a For-

foreign Policy article, argued that American politicians labeling protesting students as threats are misguided.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres advocated for freedom of speech and peaceful demonstrations in response to questions regarding the suppression of student protests in America.

US media, officials acknowledge democratic decline

The arrest of pro-Palestinian students, peacefully demonstrating against American financial support for Israel, exposes the hypocrisy of the United States' self-proclaimed stance as a staunch defender of free speech. This blatant disregard for the right to peaceful protest stands in stark contrast to the vocal condemnations they level against countries they

deem "authoritarian".

In response to the protests, senior Republican senators urged the Biden administration to deploy Federal Police (FBI) forces to suppress student demonstrators. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and his deputy, John Toon, labeled the protesters as "anti-Semitic" and "terrorism sponsors" in

a letter addressed to Attorney General Merrick Garland and Education Secretary Miguel Cardona.

As a result, the blockade of these student protests not only raises serious constitutional concerns but also undermines the very democratic principles the United States claims to uphold. By disregarding the constitutional

obligation to provide "advice and consent" on the president's choice, the Senate has effectively abandoned its duty to act on behalf of the American people. This alarming disregard for democratic norms only serves to reinforce the growing perception of America's decline as a bastion of democracy and free speech.

Republicans swayed by Zionists

House Speaker Mike Johnson, a Republican, has advocated for the dismantling of pro-Palestinian solidarity campaigns at Columbia University, sparking outrage among students. Johnson's stance aligns with his approval of a \$26 billion aid package supporting Israel.

Backed by the heads of six House committees, who possess significant influence over grants, research funding, visas, and tax codes for universities, Johnson has vowed to use all "avail-

able tools" to exert pressure on universities where protests against Israel and the Gaza war are taking place. House Republicans are also investigating federal funding for these universities, suggesting they may impose tighter congressional oversight and potentially revoke federal research grants and government support.

In a related development, 21 Democratic representatives have written to Columbia's Board of Trustees, demanding the dissolution of the

pro-Palestinian camp on campus or the resignation of the board. This letter reflects a broader debate within the United States about freedom of speech and the rights of pro-Palestinian activists, who have long claimed they face targeted harassment. The recent police crackdowns on protests at various universities, including New York University, have further complicated matters, raising questions about the institutions' commitment to protecting free speech.

Suppressing student protests under the guise of 'Anti-Semitism'

The US authorities often label student protests as "anti-Semitic" even though many Jewish students actively participate in these anti-Israel demonstrations. These students assert that Judaism is distinct from Zionism, highlighting their belief in Judaism's inherent opposition to oppression and genocide.

In a bid to counter the student uprising and stifle free speech, main-

stream American media outlets have dubbed pro-Palestinian students "rioters," "disruptors of order," and "anti-Semitic." By doing so, they attempt to sway public opinion against these protests, which fundamentally oppose Israel and condemn America's support for its crimes. A Foreign Policy report challenged this propaganda, emphasizing that the student demonstrations within university campuses embody civility, with the students even adopting an

admirable code of conduct. This code prioritizes cleanliness, refrains from using drugs or alcohol, respects others' privacy, and avoids confrontations with opponents.

Ultimately, the report maintains that the student protests stem not from anti-Semitic sentiments but from the deep shock and horror sparked by the appalling, indiscriminate violence perpetrated by the Zionist regime in Gaza.

Biden's opponents capitalize on anti-Israel protests

The New York Times analyzed the impact of anti-Israel student rallies on the Democratic Party and Biden administration, suggesting that campus chaos could pose political risks in the upcoming election year. The paper discussed the challenge of balancing support for free speech and Gaza with concerns about anti-Semitism among some American Jews.

CNN attributed the student protests partly to opposition against Biden's support for

Israel, noting that the demonstrations reflect broader discontent among American youth regarding the administration's handling of multiple issues, especially the Gaza crisis. This poses a significant threat to Biden's campaign against Donald Trump.

In a surprising move, the College Democrats of America, representing students within the Democratic Party, released a statement condemning university administrators for suspending students and requesting police

intervention during protests. The New York Times called this an unexpected critique from a historically cooperative organization.

As election campaigns gear up, senior Biden administration officials are increasingly worried about the spreading student protests against the Gaza war. Democrats hope that a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas could mitigate some of the political damage caused by the domestic conflict.

Alcaraz aiming to join Spanish winners at Roland Garros



● REUTERS

REUTERS – Carlos Alcaraz reached the French Open final for the first time on Friday, a competition very close to his heart, and wants to add his name to the list of Spanish players who have won at Roland Garros.

Alcaraz came out on top against second seed Janik Sinner, beating the Italian 2-6 6-3 3-6 6-4 6-3, and is excited by the prospect of emulating his heroes.

“Well, I have a special feeling to this tournament, because I remember when I finished school I’m running to my home just to put the TV on and watch the matches here in the French Open,” Alcaraz told reporters.

“Of course, Rafa Nadal dominating this tournament for, let’s say, 14, 15 years. It’s something unbelievable.

“I wanted to put my name on that list of the Spanish players who won this tournament. Not only Rafa. (Juan Carlos) Ferrero, (Carlos) Moya, (Albert) Costa, a lot of Spanish players, legends from our sport that won this tournament. “I really want to put my name on that list, as well.” Alcaraz also wants to be a player able to win on any surface, having already tasted success on the grass of Wimbledon and the hard courts at the U.S. Open.

“Well, I always wanted to be one of the best players in the world. If I want to be one of the best players in the world, I have to be a good player in every surface, like Roger (Federer) did, Novak (Djokovic), Rafa, (Andy) Murray,” he said.

“The best players in the world had success in every surface.

“So I consider myself a player who adapts very well his style in every surface. And, well, I grew up playing on clay but I feel more comfortable playing on hard court, for example.

“I think my game suits very well to the clay, to clay season, to the clay court, as well. So I just wanted to be a good player in every surface.”

The Spaniard became the youngest man to reach a Grand Slam final on all three surfaces, a fact he was aware of immediately after his semi-final success, but prefers to focus on what is to come.

“Yeah, I knew that. I mean, I checked the phone after the win,” a smiling Alcaraz said.

Volleyball Nations League:

No change of fortunes after Paes sacking as Iran falls to eighth defeat

Sports Desk

Iran suffered an eighth successive defeat in the 2024 Volleyball Nations League, losing 3-1 (22-25, 25-23, 25-23, 27-25) to newcomer Turkey in the final outing in Week 2 of the preliminary round.

Saturday’s setback in Fukuoka, Japan, came less than 24 hours after Brazilian head coach Mauricio Motta Paes had been axed by the Iranian Volleyball Federation following a five-set defeat against Bulgaria. Paes had been appointed to the job in February, taking over from Iranian Behrouz Ataei, to lead the country’s last-ditch attempt to secure an Olympic quota through the FIVB Men’s Ranking by the end of the VNL preliminary round.

His spell, however, was cut short after seven games in charge for what was described as the 61-year-old’s failure in “exploiting the players’ potentials”, with the decision aimed at protecting “the international reputation of the Iranian volleyball.”

“The federation will surely plan for a rejuvenation within the squad after the Nations League and I can only promise that a world-class coach will be hired after the competition. We will have four years to prepare for the next Olympics,” Milad Taqavi, the chairman of the sport’s governing body in the country, said on Friday. Iranian Payman Akbari, a number two to Paes, was named the interim coach



Iranian players go up for a block against Turkish opposite-spiker Kaan Gürbüz (1) during a preliminary-round game in the Volleyball Nations League in Fukuoka, Japan, on June 8, 2024.

● FIVB

for the rest of the VNL campaign but could do little to change the team’s fortunes in Saturday’s match, with his men overwhelmed by Turkish opposite-spiker Kaan Gürbüz, who notched up a remarkable game-high 34 points to inspire his team to a maiden VNL

victory.

Amin Esmailnejad was Iran’s top scorer for the day with 18 points, while skipper Milad Ebadipour and middle-blocker Alireza Moslehadi chipped in 14 and 13 points respectively. “There is no doubt that we are in a crisis. The team’s

morale was severely damaged after the Bulgaria defeat and there was nothing we could do about it in such a short space of time. We’ll have to make sure the players will restore their confidence and enthusiasm for the future games,” Akbari said after Saturday’s loss.

Next for Iran is a visit to Manila, Philippines, for the final week of the preliminary fixtures. Sitting rock-bottom of the 16-team table, Iran will face USA on June 19 before taking on the Netherlands a day later. Akbari’s men will square

off against reigning Olympic champion France and then conclude their campaign against Germany on June 23.

The top eight of the table will progress to the VNL Finals in Lodz, Poland – starting with the quarterfinals on June 27.

Polyák Imre & Varga János Memorial:

Yazdani granted a shot at Olympic history

Sports Desk

Iranian wrestling sensation Hassan Yazdani made his long-awaited return from injury in emphatic fashion as he marched to the free-style 86kg gold at the Polyák Imre & Varga János Memorial tournament in Budapest. His triumph meant Yazdani will be in the Iranian five-man team in July’s Paris Olympics, where he will have a shot at history.

A gold medal in the French capital will see Yazdani overtake taekwondo great Hadi Saei as the most decorated Iranian in the history of the Games with double golds and a silver. The Iranian Wrestling Federation had made it clear before the UWW Ranking Series event that Yazdani, who had been sidelined for nine months due to a surgery on his injured shoulder, would be a part of the freestyle squad in Paris “only if his health and fitness levels are approved of by the national team



Hassan Yazdani (1), pictured in last year’s World Championships in Belgrade, won the freestyle 86kg gold at the Ranking Series event in Budapest to secure his place in the Iranian team for the Paris Olympics.

● UWW

coaching staff in Budapest.” And the Iranian rose up to the occasion in the Hungarian capital as he was to back to his formidable best with less 50 days until the Paris extravaganza.

Yazdani claimed three superiority wins – including a last-four hammering of back-to-back world bronze medalist Azamat Dauletbekov of Kazakhstan – to reach the final showpiece,

before crushing American Trent Hidlay 12-2 for the ultimate prize. Yazdani’s dominant display makes the nine-time world and Olympic medalist the hot favorite for the gold in

Paris, especially after his familiar foe David Taylor, who holds a 5-1 head-to-head record against the Iranian, was stunned by fellow-American Aaron Brooks in the U.S. Olympic

trails in April.

“Our main objective here was to assess Yazdani’s fitness. This was his first tournament in nine months and we had concerns about his form but he seemed to have made a good recovery from the surgery. I’m sure he will reach his best for the Olympics,” Iran head coach Mohsen Kaveh said. Elsewhere in Budapest, Ali Rezaei bounced back from a semifinal fall defeat against Russian-born Uzbekistani representative Razambek Jamalov – a former world under-23 champion – to beat Giorgi Elbakidze 5-3 for the 74kg bronze.

Abbas Ebrahimzadeh (65kg), Adel Panahian (79kg) had grabbed a couple of silvers on the preceding night, with Shahdad Khosravi taking a 61kg bronze, as the Iranian eight-man side tallied 117 points to finish as the runner-up in the team table. Georgia won the team trophy with 133 points, with USA in third on 70.



The foreign ministers of the Developing-Eight countries pose for a family photo after a meeting held in Istanbul, Turkey, on June 8, 2024. developing8.org

Unwavering support for Gaza | D-8 throws weight behind Palestinian cause

International Desk

Throwing its weight behind Palestine, the D-8 Council of Ministers on Saturday called for an "immediate and unconditional" ceasefire in Gaza as well as the termination of Israel's months-long onslaught on the Palestinian in the besieged territory.

The foreign ministers of the Developing-Eight countries including Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Egypt, and Nigeria in the Istanbul meeting issued a collective statement that urged "an immediate, permanent and unconditional ceasefire, the cessation of the Israeli aggression on the

Palestinian people in Gaza."

The statement also called for "efforts to provide protection for Palestinian civilians and to form a practical and effective international protection mechanism for this in implementation of the resolutions of the Security Council and the United Nations General Assem-

bly on the protection of the Palestinian people."

The group affirmed "the unwavering support to the struggle of the Palestinian people to realize their inalienable rights, the full membership of Palestine in the United Nations and all the resolutions related to the Palestinian Cause in international fora."

Iran's interim Foreign Minister Ali Baqeri Kani

praised the extraordinary meeting of the foreign ministers as "an opportunity to continue the active diplomacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in support of the Palestinian cause and the resistance of the Palestinian people against the Zionist regime."

Baqeri Kani also presented nine "practical proposals" for the D-8 countries' joint action

in support of the Palestinian people and against the Israeli war on Gaza.

At least 36,801 people were killed and 83,680 wounded in Israel's onslaught on Gaza since October 7, 2023.

D-8 FMs back ...

Leveraging the international platform provided

by this meeting, Bagheri invoked the International Court of Justice's recent decision concerning the Rafah region, which centers on three main pillars: halting aggression, facilitating unhindered humanitarian aid, and establishing an international fact-finding committee.

In light of the recent political resolution passed by the International Atomic Energy Agency's Board of Governors, Bagheri stressed that genuine peace, stability, and security in the Middle East will remain elusive without addressing two key factors: the Zionist regime's nuclear disarmament and the complete cessation of occupation.

Aligning with the Muslim community's call for tangible action from Muslim governments against the Zionist regime, Iran put forth nine proposals at the meeting. Two proposals focused on securing D-8 support for the reconstruction of Palestine and the Gaza Strip, as well as establishing an Islamic fund for financial aid in this endeavor.

Designating the Zionist regime's army and security institutions as terrorist organizations for their perpetration of genocide, war crimes,

and blatant human rights violations constituted another proposal. Additional propositions included forming a D-8 contact group to collaborate with the OIC's contact group, halting the Zionist regime's crimes, and fostering comprehensive Palestinian dialogues to achieve consensus, national unity, and an agreement on governing Palestinian territories post-war and elections. Further proposals advocated for the suspension of the Zionist regime's membership international institutions and participation in events, such as the Paris Olympics, and the cessation of political, economic, and trade ties with the regime.

Establishing a D-8 legal committee to bolster Palestine's international legal campaigns, notably in the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, and supporting the recognition of the Israeli regime as an apartheid entity and launching joint efforts to revitalize UN General Assembly Resolution 3379 were also among Iran's proposals for substantive Palestinian support.

Muslim, pro-freedom, and justice-seeking demonstrators worldwide have united in protests against the Zionist regime, reflecting the recognition of Palestine as an independent state by

numerous countries and the UN General Assembly resolution endorsing Palestine's official, full membership in the United Nations.

Student-led movements in the West and beyond, the International Criminal Court's indictments against the Israeli regime's leadership and other related developments point toward a decisive Palestinian triumph in the Gaza battle. Iran's practical proposals at the D-8 meeting serve to fortify this victory and bolster Palestine's standing on the international arena. Presenting these proactive measures underscores Iran's unwavering commitment to the Palestinian cause and pragmatic support for the Islamic Resistance, which remains a central priority of the nation's foreign policy and, as Iran's Leader affirmed, is being implemented unhindered.

Iran's dynamic diplomacy thrives across multiple dimensions, as evidenced by its active engagement in regional and international forums and steadfast advocacy for the Palestinian people and the Resistance Front. The foreign policy tenets of the Iranian government and the late president and foreign minister's approach remain guiding principles diligently pursued without faltering or stagnation.

Israel claims 210 Palestinian lives in Gaza to retrieve four captives



International Desk

Israeli forces released four captives held by the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas since October last year after a violent raid on Saturday that killed over 200 Palestinians in airstrikes on a refugee camp in central Gaza.

The Israeli forces directly targeted civilians, including children, during "a barbaric and brutal aggression" against Nuseirat refugee camp, Gaza government media office said, adding that at least 210 people were left dead and over 400 others injured. The injured were taken to Al Awda Hospital in the camp and the Al Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir el-Balah.

A spokesman at Al-Aqsa hospital said the number of injured is so high that it is difficult to confirm the exact number.

"Dozens of injured people are lying on the ground and medical teams are trying to save them with the simple medical capabilities they have," the Palestinian Health Ministry wrote on Facebook.

The ministry released images, showing patients, including children, who were lying in the corridors of the hospital as they were covered in blood.

A report by Reuters said that it was not immediately clear if the "captive releasing operation" and the Israeli air assault were part of the same operation but both took place in central Gaza's al-Nuseirat, a densely built-up and often embattled area in the eight-month-old war on the besieged strip.

No Israeli official mentioned the scores of Palestinians who were massacred in the camp. Instead, the military issued a state-



Mourners react during the funeral of Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes, in Deir Al-Balah, in central Gaza Strip on June 8, 2024.

[REUTERS](https://reuters.com)

ment, saying that they "rescued four captives" from the central Gaza Strip.

They were in "good medical condition" and were taken to hospital for medical checks following a "complex daytime operation" in Gaza's Nuseirat, it said.

The captives were held during Hamas unprecedented operation against the occupied territories on October 7.

The total number of Israeli captives still held by Hamas is now 116, of which at least 41 are dead. Israel's war on Gaza has so far killed more than 36,801 people, according to the Gaza health ministry.

Tehran summit on Afghanistan underscores regional initiatives



[ISNA](https://isna.ir)

International Desk

Tehran hosted the second meeting of the Regional Contact Group on Afghanistan on Saturday to address concerns about the Central Asian country, according to Iran's special envoy for Afghanistan.

Hassan Kazemi Qomi said special envoys from Iran, Pakistan, Russia, and China emphasized regional initiatives to bolster Afghanistan's national security during a press conference after the meeting.

"The discussions in Tehran today focused on terrorism-related issues, assisting in security and border management, and finding solutions for migrants, who constitute nearly 30% of Afghanistan's population," he added.

Neighboring countries are actively pursuing regional cooperation to enhance Afghanistan's security against terrorism and address human rights-related issues, the envoy said.

Kazemi Qomi stated that the meeting in Tehran was part of a series of regional and international discussions considering the sensitivity of the Afghanistan issue and events impacting its security and stability.

The Regional Contact Group on Afghanistan was established in January as Iran's initiative to address concerns about the Central Asian country, he added.

"One of the concerns raised was the issue of terrorism, which affects both the people of Afghanistan and neighboring countries," the Iranian official said, adding, "This indicates that terrorism was the focus of yesterday's occupiers and today they are trying to stoke instability."

Referring to the forthcoming Doha Summit in Qatar, Kazemi Qomi said the four countries of Iran, Russia, China and Pakistan addressed the concerns in Saturday's meeting and highly recommended that the neighboring and regional countries also involve in the initiative.

The upcoming gathering, dubbed "Doha III," will be the third in Qatar's capital on the subject since UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres initiated the process with special envoys on Afghanistan to facilitate a coherent global approach to the Taliban-governed country grappling with severe humanitarian, economic, and human rights challenges.

The United Nations is finalizing the agenda for a crucial two-day international conference on Afghanistan scheduled for June 30-31, aiming for broad acceptance from all parties.

World Handicrafts Day

Iran's crafts diversity stands out: *Minister*

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran boasts approximately 300 diverse handicraft fields, making it unique globally, according to the Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts. Speaking at a ceremony commemorating the Handicrafts Week (June 7 to 15) and World Handicrafts Day (June 10), Ezzatollah Zarghami stated, highlighted the late president's particular emphasis on handicrafts, saying, "The first step towards transformation in any field is a change in perspective. Initially, handicrafts were considered secondary in this ministry, but now their missions have become primary due to the transformation in perspective initiated by the late president." The ceremony coincided with the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the World Crafts Council, IRNA wrote. He added, "Today, with 3.5 billion people having visa waivers to enter the country, there have been improvements in handicrafts. However, we're still at the beginning of appreciating the di-

versity and value of this art." He continued, "Anyone aiming for handicraft exports faces no obstacles, as the president has resolved it. He did the same in tourism. I suggested that if we want Iranian tourism to flourish, we should reduce the strictness we have in visa issuance and make it unilateral, which he agreed to." Zarghami emphasized the late president's emphasis on handicrafts supply, noting, "For this reason, he ordered all governors to establish handicraft markets at the entrances of cities. Some have done it, but many have yet to do so." Deputy minister for handicrafts and traditional arts highlighted achievements, including facilitating temporary export of goods, revising export base prices, tax exemptions, focusing on the private sector and chambers of commerce, insuring 10,000 artisan families, adding 150,000 to employment, training 65,000 individuals through various programs, and achieving \$825 million in exports, among other initiatives of the Tourism

Ministry. Maryam Jalali addressed representatives and ministers from other departments, saying, "Handicrafts are not just one or a few hundred products; they are a cultural, social, economic, and political institution that, in recent days, has revitalized attention to the four dimensions of culture, society, economy, and policy, which couldn't have been achieved without the synergy of all sections." Director-General of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts of Tehran Province, Parham Janfeshan, who stated in another part of the event, "Comprehensive employment in the country with a family-centered economy, which is handicrafts, is achieved." He announced, "Handicrafts are a combination of art and industry, which is mainly influential in household employment and comprehensive employment in the country. Handicrafts are an important part of this ministry." He added, "The province may appear to be an industrial province, but it might be inter-



esting to know that there are 170 active handicraft fields in Tehran Province, and one-third of handicraft exports belong to this province. 15,000 registered artists in Tehran Province are active in handicrafts and traditional arts."

June 10 is designated as World Handicrafts Day, and to commemorate this occasion, 450 programs are being implemented in various provinces of the country during World Handicrafts Day and Handicrafts Week.

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Ezzatollah Zarghami speaks during the ceremony commemorating the World Handicrafts Day, on June 8, 2024 in Tehran. mcth.ir

'Memories of Nature' 25-year spiritual journey in landscape painting on display



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

Adham Zargham's exhibition, 'Memories of Nature,' is currently underway across three galleries at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art. Zargham, known for his stunning landscapes, uses his art to explore nature and highlight the divine power behind it. He believes that art can be a form of worship, praising the Creator through the depiction of natural beauty. His 66 years of life have led to a unique artistic approach that blends

imagination and reality, resulting in over 127 oil, pastel, and gouache paintings created over 25 years. Zargham's work is known for its direct and unmediated interaction with natural landscapes, blending imagination and reality. Zargham's art sessions, lasting 2 to 4 hours, took place directly in nature. The exhibition will run from May 15 to June 30. Iran Daily reporter conducted an exclusive interview with Zargham to know more about his style and technique. The full text of the interview follows:

IRAN DAILY: Please tell us about your educational and painting background.

ZARGHAM: I was born in 1958 in Abadan. In 1977, I entered the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Tehran, majoring in Visual Arts with a focus on painting. I later earned my master's and doctorate in art research from the same university. Until the 1979 Islamic Revolution, we were focused solely on painting and learning. The Revolution, guided by late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, brought a spiritual perspective to our art, which influenced my approach to integrating this spiritual essence into my work. The 1979 Islamic Revolution in fact gave my painting a purpose.

Why did you choose natural landscapes for your work?

Nature allows for a deeper reflection on the elements of creation. Figurative painting focuses more on humans and earthly concerns. As Claude Monet once wished, to become one with nature, elements in

nature are wholly submissive to God. A tree, for example, follows its natural course of blooming and shedding leaves, while humans often resist and follow their own desires.

This exhibition showcases 25 years of your professional work in painting natural landscapes. How did it start?

When I turned 40, I prayed for my goal to transcend mere artistic im-

provement, hoping that painting would help me understand the greatness of God. In 1998, while teaching students in Laleh Park, I felt a sudden clarity, a revelation of nature in a new light. This resulted in a 50x50 cm painting that marked the beginning of my spiritual journey in landscape painting. This piece is now held in the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art. Since then, I've continued to explore nature and create numerous landscape paintings.

How does your unique perspective on nature and painting influence your work?

In verse 44 of Chapter Al-Isra, God says, "The seven heavens, the Earth, and all those in them glorify Him...". Inspired by this verse, I sought to understand and praise the natural elements. I feel that every part of nature glorifies God, and understanding this language is fascinating and thrilling for me. This perspective influences my brushstrokes and color use, resulting in distinctive paintings.

